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The BOB has raised as a budgetary issue whether to continue the CIA covertly operated fleet of six U-2R reconnaissance aircraft. Since this is a unique capability for giving you non-attributable, high quality reconnaissance to meet world-wide contingencies, I asked the 303 Committee to review the question and give you their recommendations.

The U-2R is a completely new model of U-2 aircraft which is more maneuverable, flies higher and has more

25X1

[redacted] than the original U-2.

The CIA, through the auspices of the NRO, maintains a fleet of six of these aircraft, four at the home base at Edwards Air Force Base and two at an operational base on

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[redacted] All aircraft are maintained in an "operationally ready" posture. Both bases have a capability for worldwide deployment on a 24-hour notice by [redacted] and, depending on the deployment base distance, can be airborne on an operational mission in about 50 hours after notification.

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[redacted]  
operationally ready for overflight of any place on the globe. There are informal agreements with [redacted]

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American U-2 agreement (due for renewal in March 1970) provides for coordination and cooperation on [redacted] 25X1 missions. With the assistance of the U.S. Navy, exercises have been conducted to demonstrate capability for operating from aircraft carriers, and contingency plans include this deployment option. There are sufficient [redacted]

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[redacted]

At the present time, operational reconnaissance missions are being flown from the [redacted] base using [redacted]

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(V) are ready to do so now; however, since March 1968, we have for political reasons restricted all aircraft overflights in this area, and the CIA U-2's have been covering [redacted] 25X1 coastal targets from a flight path 20 miles offshore.

As a reliable, safe aircraft, the U-2R has exceeded its expectations. Normal attrition was forecast to have been two aircraft by now. The difficult period of aircraft test and pilot transition and training has been completed and about 5,000 hours have been flown without a single loss.

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